Tells the Facts and Names the Names

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In This Issue

THE PAY-OFF

- The Nader/Green Surge Has Given Many Young Folk a Taste for the Excitement of Radical Organizing. People Carry Such Hours and Days With Them for the Rest of Their Lives

JIM CROW AT EPA

- Carol Browner Heads Up Racist Sinkhole

VENTURA'S SCORE

- Fun Guy, But What's He Done?

OUR LITTLE SECRETS

- Studs Terkel Describes a Dinner with Churchill

- Gen. Wesley Clark and His Mustang

You Could Smell the Fear

Get Nader !

A political culture was under siege. Hear the panic as the waters poured into Atlantis.

Jesse Jackson cried out that "Our very lives are at stake". Paul Wellstone quavered that George W. Bush will "repeal the twentieth century". Martin Peretz wrote furiously in The New Republic that "Naderism represents the emotional satisfaction of the American left at the expense of the social and economic satisfaction of women, blacks, gays, and poor people in America."

Back in 1992 Jackie Blumenthal, wife of Sidney Blumenthal, was asked why she and her husband were such rabid supporters of a con man from Arkansas called Bill Clinton. "It's our turn", she hissed at once, as though that settled the matter once and for all.

And so indeed it was: the turn of that whole class that had endured the twelve long years of Reagan/Bush time to take their rightful place in Washington. Of course, in terms of substantive change, America remained a one-party state. By the spring of 1993 Al Gore was sitting down to write the press release announcing the recruitment as White House senior counselor of David Gergen, hauled out of the archives of Reagan/Bush time to take over as impresario of the floundering Clinton presidency. It was all over.

The amazing thing is that Clinton never endured mutiny from his left. He stuffed NAFTA down the throats of labor and the AFL-CIO endorsed him in 1996. (Why so quick with another endorsement in 2000? One incentive may have been a White House threat to unleash the Justice Department on Rich Trumka, top AFL-CIO official, for financing shenanigans during the campaign to reelect Ron Carey as president of the Teamsters)

Clinton threw the crime bill and the welfare bill at the liberals and they took it with barely a bleat. In 1996 he never faced a challenge, as had Jimmy Carter from old-line liberalism embodied in the form of Ted Kennedy. In 2000 the only halfway-serious threat to Gore came from another neo-liberal, Bill Bradley. By the early summer we were set for another status quo election, a reaffirmation of the one-party state.

Somewhere in the third week of October the Gore crowd woke up to the clear and awful thought that they might not make it, that maybe it wasn't their turn any more and that the man to blame was Ralph Nader. It wasn't the first time Nader had shown up on the crisis radar screen. Right around the time of the Democratic convention in August Gore had felt it necessary to make a populist feint to his left. Surrogates like Pat Ireland of the National Organization of Women, Carl Pope of the Sierra Club, Barney Frank and Jesse Jackson were sent out to firm up the faithful and paint George Bush as the Great Beast. But at that time, before the debates, Gore was heading up in the polls to what looked like an impregnable 10 point lead and the Nader numbers were around 3 per cent. There didn't seem too much point in roughing up Ralph and the Greens. Best let the defectors slowly trickle back across the lines.

By October 21 it was a very different story. Gore had bombed in the debates. The Greens had organized a whole string of Nader super-rallies across the northern half of the country from Seattle

(**Nader** continued on page 7)

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Our Little Secrets

Lunch with Studs

In Chicago to speak on Gore and Nader at the 57th St Bookstore, part of the ever valuable independent store, the Seminary Coop, we went along with our host Danny Postel for lunch with Studs Terkel, aged 88. Studs claims he's deaf now. We say "claims" because thirteen years ago Studs interviewed a CounterPunch editor for his radio show and exhibited similar facility in ignoring any unwelcome interpolations and in guiding the conversation along his preferred path.

Studs generously entertained us in a pleasant Armenian restaurant in the Loop. Having recently lost his wife of 60 years Studs lives alone in the Uptown neighborhood. Watching a game on tv one night, Studs observed a burglar poking about in the bedroom. Studs hailed him cautiously, then got up and went over to his jacket to give the intruder some money. "I meant to give him maybe a couple of $20 bills", Studs rasps, "but I came up with the whole roll, which was $220. So I went over to hand it to him. He kept his face turned away, but said Thank You and made off."

Studs reminisces about his close friend James Cameron, a fine British journalist long dead, who was always in trouble with his various employers for inconveniently honest reporting from Korea and other parts. Cameron once worked for the press magnate Max Aitken, aka Lord Beaverbrook, a Canadian-born tycoon who had also served with ruthless verve as Churchill's minister of aviation during the war. Beaverbrook had fired Cameron, but suddenly sent him a telegram from the south of France, telling him to come at once, to have dinner with his former employer, along with two other guests, Winston Churchill and Aristotle Onassis.

This was at a point in the 1950s when there was widespread speculation that Churchill, who spent much of his time on the Cote d'Azur at Beaverbrook's villa, was in a state of senile dementia. Cameron, by now working for one of Beaverbrook's rivals, perceived he was being offered, for some inexplicable reason, the possibility of a great scoop. He hastened to the south of France and made his way to Beaverbrook's place, to find his host peering through binoculars at another villa lower down the hill, where Cameron could dimly see a very old man being lowered into a swimming pool by attendants. Cackling malignly, the elderly but still vigorous Beaverbrook told Cameron the man splashing about in the pool was Somerset Maugham, whom he held under close observation for the next few minutes, cackling vulgarly about the great writer's enfeebled physical condition.

The butler finally called Cameron to dinner. Inside the dining room he found Beaverbrook and Onassis deep in tedious conversation about business matters. Suddenly the doors burst open and the butler and a footman carried in Churchill and deposited him in a chair at the head of the table, where the great man remained inert. Many minutes passed in this manner, before Churchill suddenly raised his head and said "Max, didn't I send you to Moscow to talk to Stalin during the war?" Beaverbrook briefly looked up from his parleys with Onassis. "Yes, Winston, you did." Long pause. "Well, did you go?" At which point Churchill relapsed into coma.

Why, we asked Terkel, was Gore Vidal so lukewarm, even hostile to Nader, whom he stigmatized as "boring". Hadn't Vidal derided the Democrats for years, made sarcastic comments about his distant cousin? Studs said he reckoned he knew the reason. Many years before Vidal had come to Chicago to promote a book. Though Studs welcomed him to his show, Phil Donohue, at that time riding high as a radio host, declined to interview him. These days Donohue is one of the chairs of the Nader campaign. Vidal is not a man to forget a slight and Studs reckoned that this was probably Vidal's long postponed revenge on Donohue.

Then Terkel hauled out of his pocket a clip from the late Chicago columnist Mike Royko, published in the Chicago Daily News on December 1, 1970. Royko had printed a coupon carrying the names of the four men most often mentioned as possible Democratic nominees for the presidency in 1972: Muskie, McGovern, Kennedy and Humphrey. Then Royko added Nader's name. 2,067 people responded to this coupon. Their vote went as follows: Nader, 1,614; Muskie, 148; Kennedy, 42; McGovern 41; Humphrey, 11.

"The response to Nader," Royko wrote, "was surprising for something besides its volume. About a third of the people who said they like him as a possible presidential candidate also wrote accompanying letters. I've never received that much mail about any political figure I've written about.

A couple of days after the lunch with Terkel we went to a debate at the Hothouse in downtown Chicago, a great club featuring good music and political events. Here were ranged advocates of the Nader/Green third party bid against Democratic loyalists. We heard Sam Smucker, an organizer from the United Electrical Workers, put up a strong argument as to why labor should rethink its loyalty to the Democrats. He pointed out that at the stroke of a pen Clinton could have helped labor immensely by any number of executive orders. No such orders came.

Punks & Reds

CounterPunch has many friends in Chicago, and we made some new ones. Our talk at Great Expectations bookstore in Evanston was cancelled at the last minute by the owner Jeff Rice. (We heard no convincing explanation and, to be frank, wondered whether aversion to our denunciations of the Gore/Lieberman ticket had fuelled Rice's move. Gore loyalists were frantic to keep us off public

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The doors burst open and the butler and the footman carried in Churchill and deposited him in a chair, where the great man remained inert.

radio on the University of Illinois campus at Champagne-Urbana. At other places too.) Worried that CounterPunchers following our published schedule might show at Great Expectations, we went along to check out the scene and sure enough, there were some expectant faces including that of Daniel Sinker, maestro of Punk Planet, a fine, very well-produced zine. Dan's Nov/Dec issue was filled with interesting political material, every line of which explains why the frantic injunctions of the mainmstream Dems that Naderites vote for "the lesser of two evils" was at least in the case of many radical people under thirty, tending to fall on indifferent ears.

On the ears of people over eighty too, at least in the case of Clarence Kailin. Departing Chicago for a talk to a crowd mustered by the Rainbow Bookstore collective in the lecture hall of the legendary teacher Harvey Goldberg on the UW campus, we saw Clarence among a sea of faces fifty years his junior, applauding our exposition of the "wasted vote" factor as it concerned Gore. Clarence, 86, is one of the 230 or surviving Lincoln Brigaders, and like so many of them still an indefatigable organizer.

Among the many acivities on the political cv of this Brigader: "Worked at Gisholt Machine Co. 1945-1949 where I was very active in the United Steelworkers of America union (Local 1404) August, 1949. Our home at 109 S. Park Street (in the triangle) was headquarters for 100 black striking farm-workers (imported mostly from Florida) in Mazomanie. Raised money, food, clothes as they were destitute. Strike lasted 30 days when the sheriff and his friends raised money to put them on buses and send them home. Racism and segregation extremely pervasive in Madison at that time.

"Around 1950 went to Washington DC to lobby legislators to protest the US building of hydrogen bomb. Same time I got a black man from our neighborhood to run for Alderman. The first time a black person had tried for that position. He lost. Worked with Measure for Measure, organized to assist the Sunflower County Co-op in Mississippi (leading figure there was Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer). Before black history was taught in Madison schools, I began teaching black history at YMCA, Edgewood College, PTA groups, churches, neighborhood centers and elsewhere. By about 1971 or 1972, got the school system to adopt new textbooks. With the help of a number of black people, we got the school system to form a human relations department and hire a director. Worked with the "Madison Area Committee on Southern Africa" which carried on anti-apartheid activities, organized protest against a racist plaque "NIG", that had been erected at Hoover Dam, Nevada. Plaque dedicated to a black dog who was a mascot to the men who built the dam. Action received nation-wide attention and plaque was removed. Received many death threats as a result."

The next day Kailin took us down to a little park on the shore of Lake Mendota and proudly showed us the memorial to the US volunteers who went to Spain to fight Franco and fascism. He got the idea and the designer (David Ryan of Oakland) from a similar memorial put up at the University of Washington in Seattle. The handsome bronze plaques front and back of a good chunk of granite was entirely his idea and after working for most of last year and raising $15000, Kailin had the pleasure of seeing an opening ceremony on October 31, 1999 with Madison mayor Susan Bauman, also the head of the state AFL-CIO, the president of the Wisconsin state senate and prominent Madison leftists among the crowd.

Memorials and memories. Even if the Nader/Green surge vanishes off the margin of history by the end of the year(which we hope won't happen) it still will have given many young folk a taste for the excitements of radical political organizing. People carry such hours and days with them for the rest of their lives.

THAT GENERAL CLARK

CounterPuncher Jessica Matthews writes the following memoir of her experience ten years ago with General Wesley Clark, ex-Nato supremo: "My husband was a junior officer at Ft. Irwin when Clark was the commander there. I managed the "Auto Craft Shop" on post. An auto craft shop is a large garage where servicemen can bring in their "privately owned vehicles" (aka cars, trucks) to repair. Typically a customer borrows tools from the shop, rents the bay for some nominal fee, and then changes oil or fixes brakes, etc. We had had hourly employees from the local town working there to help sign out tools, clean up and just keep an eye things. They were young, underpaid and were asked to manage things when I could not be there. The shop closed at 9:00 pm so patrons were asked to turn in their tools and start wrapping up for the night at 8:45. These were the basic rules because we could not pay our employees for the extra time of keeping the auto craft shop open after 9:00 PM.

"One evening two middle aged men dressed in civilian clothes and driving their '67 Mustangs (yes both!) came to the shop to change their oil at around 8:55 PM. The employee working that night told the customers that it was too late to start any new work. The men became angry and demanded to sign out tools and use the shop. The kid explained the rules and said that he had to close the place at 9:00. Eventually the men left in a big huff.

"The next day, when I came in to work, the post Inspector General was at the shop to "document all of the problems" with it. The IG, as I understand it, is a supposedly a quasi-independent office that responds to complaints of problems or corruption in the military. The IG and his henchmen walked all over the place to find problems. I was really intimidated and didn't know why they were there. They could not find anything wrong -- the place was run pretty well so there was no ammunition to use against us.

"Later my manager came to the shop to tell me what was going on. As you may have guessed, one of the guys that came to the shop the previous night was General Clark --the other was a notorious colonel, Harold Fuller the second in command. Clark had ordered the Inspector General to the shop as punishment for not being allowed to change oil!

"Anyway from my point of view it is all true about Clark and was true 10 years ago! He is a vain, career-obsessed courtier who does not deserve to be in charge of the lives of a division of squirrels let alone American kids." CP

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One Outsider Who Won

How's Ventura Doing?

By Steve Perry

Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura has taken to the talk show circuit once again, this time to promote his second book, Do I Stand Alone?: Going to the Mat Against Political Pawns and Media Jackals, which recently entered the New York Times nonfiction list at number 16. Under Ventura, whose 1998 triumph engendered fear and contempt among pundits and party hacks all across the land, the national book tour has become an annual rite of governance. At home Minnesotans think that Jesse's tops; his job approval rating holds steady in the 70 percent range, wavering little since an early dust-up over his bluff characterization of institutional religion as "a sham and a crutch" in a Playboy interview.

At the State Capitol it's a different story. Ventura has declined to build lasting accommodations with either major party, and he refuses to meet with lobbyists who stalk the halls there. The 1999 legislative session opened with both parties thrown off kilter by Ventura's ascension and unsure how to play him, and ended in a flurry of vetoes —- 39 in all, mostly line-item cuts —- gleefully rendered by Ventura with a pig-shaped stamp. Ventura's legislative agenda for '99 was modest; he prevailed in his quest to reduce Minnesota's progressive motor vehicle licensing fees while resisting a Republican push for much deeper permanent tax cuts. He labored successfully to shepherd through a light-rail mass transit plan.

Come the 2000 session, Ventura's main priority was a proposal to replace the two houses of the legislature with a single body. Besides trimming the cost of government, he argued sensibly it would make for more open and democratic affairs by doing away with the House-Senate conference committees routinely used by pols to lard bills with pork and to blunt or sharpen their purview according to the wishes of the legislature's cash patrons. When legislators predictably kept the bill from reaching a floor vote, Ventura called them "gutless cowards" in the press. Far from being chastened, however, several began sporting Gutless Coward buttons on the floor. Likewise, when Ventura groused publicly over what he deemed a female legislator's unduly friendly hands, they took up wearing Don't Touch Me buttons.

Public decorum aside, this pretty much captures the tenor of Ventura's present relationship with the legislature. His legislative cornerstone for 2001, a plan to stop funding public schools through local property taxes and make the state 100 percent responsible for the K-12 education tab, will receive serious consideration, if only because business sees in it the alluring potential for rollbacks in its own taxes.

By conventional standards of measure, Ventura has generally proven to be the fiscal conservative/social liberal he always advertised himself to be. John Wodele, his chief mouthpiece and a principal adviser, was for years a DLC Democrat. Former congressman Tim Penny, another DLCer, is also a Ventura intimate, or was until he spurned an Independence Party run for the U.S. Senate. In matters of policy, Ventura gives short shrift to most social spending proposals, though he's more supple and less punitive on welfare than the mainstream of either major party.

His greatest value lies in his use of the bully pulpit to sound themes of popular discontent.

Where the public purse is not centrally at issue, though, Ventura's positions are often very good. He steadfastly condemns the mounting use of sanctimonious religious rhetoric in politics, favors extensive campaign finance reform and the decriminalization of most drug offenses, and opposes three strikes and mandatory sentencing guidelines. He declares Washington's periodic assaults on the entertainment industry to be fatuous and politically motivated, and sneers at what he calls "morality brokers" in politics. He terms himself a "moderate libertarian" but in reality he is what used to be known as a liberal Republican, in the days before Tailgunner Joe Lieberman extinguished the species' last exemplar, Lowell Weicker, in 1988. [Eds' note: Lieberman Castro-baited Weicker back then, so we weren't surprised to see the godly Senator paying a special visit this campaign to the grave of Jorge Mas Conosa, the Cuban émigré leader thankfully taken from us a couple of years ago.]

Minnesota's brewing legislative gridlock is of little consequence to Ventura. His greatest value lies in his use of the bully pulpit to sound themes of popular discontent. Jesse is a sort of political missing link; in him resides all the hope and bitterness of middle America's largely silenced white working class—and most of its flaws, too. Ventura is at heart a moralist, and hence his analysis of what's wrong with politics and media tends to be based in misplaced assessments of character, topped with a dollop of conventional wisdom. He is eloquent in his condemnations of cant and false piety, and he sees in very general terms that money in politics is a large part of the problem. But no sooner has he said so than he's off on some well-worn tangent. He excoriates the public for its apathy toward politics, never stopping to consider that their disaffection may be a direct result of the candidates purchased for their consumption. He maintains, nonsensically, that Democrats and Republicans differ radically on public policy, and what's needed is a new wave of centrists.

Then there is his animus toward the press. There are plenty of good reasons to hate the media, but they are not Jesse's reasons. His is a personal beef. Years ago Ventura won a landmark lawsuit against a pro wrestling promoter for the unpaid and unauthorized use of Ventura footage in a series of videos, and since then he has never quite gotten over the abiding conviction that he ought to be compensated, or at least consulted, every time his name is mentioned in a public forum. (Last year when Garrison Keillor published his satiric novella about Ventura's rise, Jesse's first public complaint was that he wouldn't see any of the proceeds.) To say he hasn't chosen his battles well is a considerable understatement.

But on the whole he has shone a welcome and sometimes telling light on business-as-usual. His prior celebrity may complicate the mythology of Jesse-as-Everyman that helped him win his seat, but there's no question that Ventura has played a salutary role in demystifying the business of politics and reviving the forgotten figure of the citizen-politician. There is no great mystery to politics and governance, he said on Politically Incorrect. Eyeing his fellow panelists, he averred that "any of us four could understand it". In its quietly perverse way, that's as radical a statement as any elected official has uttered this year. CP

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Jim Crow at EPA

Driving Ms Browner

Over the past eight years Environmental Protection Agency director Carol Browner has visited Chicago more than a dozen times. Each time she comes to the Windy City, Browner has requested that Ronald Harris, an EPA staffer at the Region 5 headquarters, serve as her driver and gofer. At first Harris felt honored. But then he began to wonder if he wasn't being singled out for malign reasons. Harris is black.

When confronted by this inequity, Carol Browner shrugged as if to say what's the big deal. "I look forward to going to Chicago so that Mr. Harris can drive me", Browner testified at an October 4 hearing before the House Committee on Science, which was investigating charges of whistleblower abuse inside the federal government. The big deal is that racism appears to be running rampant throughout Browner's agency and she has done nothing to stem it.

For decades, the Departments of Interior and Agriculture have been known to be sinkholes of racism and sexism. A recent report by Blacks in Government describes Bruce Babbitt's Interior Department as "the whitest of all federal agencies". In a recent case, a staffer at Interior confronted her manager after learning from a colleague that he had called her "a Mississippi nigger". The woman asked if he had indeed made this slur and the manager replied, "Would it make you feel better if I called you a 'good Mississippi nigger'?"

The USDA is currently facing seven class action suits alleging systemic racism in its agencies. One case cites the experience of a Hispanic female recruiter. The woman had been hired precisely to recruit more minorities into the lily-white Forest Service. She did her job so well that a Forest Service supervisor erupted at her, screaming: "Don't send me any more cunts, niggers or spics!" These cases are appalling. But civil rights organizers in DC say that the situation inside the EPA may be worse and that conditions there have deteriorated since the election of Clinton in 1992.

Take the case of Anita Nickens, who works as a mid-level staffer at the EPA's American Indian Environmental Office. In 1993, she was one of six EPA employees on a staff retreat at a lodge on the Cherokee Indian Reservation in North Carolina. She was the only black in the group. Just prior to Carol Browner's arrival at the lodge, a supervisor instructed to Nickens to go and scrub the toilet. "Director Browner does not use the toilet behind anyone else". Nickens was told.

Nickens says she was repulsed by the order, but did the job because she feared retaliation. Later she overheard her supervisor bragging about this humiliating order to others. "I went back into my room, locked myself in and cried", Nickens says. "I was so embarrassed and blamed myself for giving in to that request. I feel like I let down other black women." When Nickens filed a complaint, she was punished by the agency.

Just prior to Carol Browner's arrival at the lodge, a supervisor instructed Nickens to go and scrub the toilet.

In August, a US District Court awarded Dr. Marsha Coleman-Adebayo $600,000 in a suit brought against the EPA. The court ruled that Coleman-Abedayo had been subjected to a racial discrimination and a hostile work environment. Coleman-Adebayo, an EPA program director, says that she was routinely passed over for promotions at EPA despite holding a doctoral degree. She says a colleague told her that she didn't get promoted because she was "uppity". Coleman-Adebayo recounted a scene that she says is all-too-familiar for blacks inside the EPA. "I was the only black person at a staff meeting and one of the others in the room called me 'an honorary white male,'" Coleman-Adebayo said.

Coleman-Adebayo noted that while African-Americans represent only 17 percent of the EPA workforce, they represent 57 percent of those fired by the Agency. "The EPA is a 21st century plantation", Coleman-Adebayo said. "Promising careers have been destroyed and other colleagues have suffered stress-related illnesses and perhaps even early death, like Lilian Peasant [an EPA staffer who was the victim of abuse and harassment]. Many blacks have seen their lives compromised and aspirations crushed."

In testimony before the House Science Committee, Coleman described how racism at the highest levels of EPA has impeded the agency's willingness to help African nations address toxic waste problems and other issues. "Because Ms. Browner fails to act, US foreign policy suffers, as well. For example, on a trip to South Africa during a Gore/Mbeki commission meeting (a meeting chaired by Vice President Al Gore and South African President Thabo Mbeki), the Assistant EPA Administrator for International Activities referred to Peter Mokaba, then Deputy Minister of the Environment in South Africa and a hero in the struggle for freedom in that country as a 'necklacer'—that is a murderer—while talking about him with Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson. Mr. Mokaba has never been accused, much less convicted of any such crime! But, the EPA officials' libelous acts and prejudices are allowed to taint the fabric of US international environmental policy.

"In another example of gross insensitivity, South Africa requested EPA's assistance on behalf of a community which had been poisoned by Vanadium. We had agreed to help. When I attempted to meet our obligations, I was officially reprimanded, refused travel requests, and removed from the position.

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I was replaced by a white male with no background in Africa. As with other African-Americans, I was hindered by managers from providing my expertise to address international environmental issues."

These complaints appear to be the rule, not the exception at EPA—an agency that is charged with fighting environmental racism. In September more than 150 black EPA employees filed a class action suit against Browner's agency, alleging widespread bias, discrimination and retaliatory practices. The suit catalogues an appalling record: of arbitrary performance reviews, crackdowns by supervisors on whistleblowers, blacks being passed over promotions, denied raises and punished for complaining about environmental and workplace hazards. The suit is backed by the NAACP. "The careers of an excessive number of black scientists and other minority employees at EPA have been unjustly devastated by the ongoing and rampant racism occuring throughout the agency", said Leroy Warren, head of the NAACP's federal sector task force. "In too many instances within EPA, Jim Crow Jr. appears to be using mercenaries to control and punish racial minorities, women and decent white men."

The suit details a number of other cases of discrimination. A black female staffer in the EPA's Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics said that after she took her complaints to the internal union she suffered lower performance ratings and other reprisals. She says that after filing a complaint she received a telephone call from her second-line supervisor who called her "a black bitch". A former black attorney with EPA, Lashanda Holloway, was paid $30,000 less per year than white lawyers with similar experience and credentials. Dana Hawkins, a black staffer in the EPA's Atlanta office, claims that her supervisor illegally used her Social Security number to acquire information about her personal life and then used it to harass her.

The Atlanta office has been plagued by racial problems. Most recently, the Department of Labor found EPA that retaliated against Dr. Rose Russo for cooperating with an investigation into whistleblower harassment at the agency. The EPA reassigned Dr. Russo from her position as lab director at the Georgia regional office effective November 5, 2000 — a position she held for 16 years — to a position handling grants at EPA headquarters. In the October 3 decision, the Department of Labor directed EPA to cancel the transfer because it was based on retaliation. "We've made these complaints known to Ms. Browner, but they have been ignored", said Leroy Warren. Warren described Browner and her top staffers as being "arrogant," "remote" and unwilling to punish racists inside the agency. As a result, the NAACP has asked Browner to resign.

Browner's EPA has also turned a blind eye to discrimination and racist conduct by some of its favored contractors. A notorious example is the case of the Foster/Wheeler company, a New Jersey-based construction firm that has enjoyed numerous EPA contracts despite persistant complaints of sexual harassment and systemic racism inside the company. In January, a federal court levied a $1.3 million judgement against Foster/Wheeler in a class action suit brought by 100 black employees working out of the company's Chicago office.

"Promising careers have been destroyed and other colleagues have suffered stress-related illnesses and perhaps even early death… Many blacks have seen their lives compromised and aspirations crushed."

This August another Foster/Wheeler employee, Terrence Townsend, filed suit against the firm, alleging racial discrimination at an EPA contract site in Stratford, Connecticut. Towsend says that black employees of Foster/Wheeler are "given heavier workloads, more undesirable assignments and paid far less than our white counterparts". After Townsend complained to company officials about these discriminatory practices, a white coworker handed him a hangman's noose and told him, "This noose is for you if you get out of hand".Townsend also said he was forced to use a portable toilet at the EPA site which was covered with Ku Klux Klan graffiti. Townsend said he interpreted the noose and the KKK graffiti as warnings that he would suffer personal injury if he stayed with the company. He soon quit and now works as a technical specialist at GZA GeoEnvironmental in Newton, Massachuesetts. "Working at that site put a lot of stress on me," Townsend says. "It's hard to believe that this kind of discrimination still happens, especially on a government-contracted site."

Townsend's attorney, Margaret Burnham, says that EPA has been aware of the problems at Foster/Wheeler for nearly a decade and has taken no action. "These kinds of incidents are now widespread across the country," Burnham said. "But this one was particularly egregious because Terry Townsend was personally targeted. This was not just a generic act."

The racial bias at EPA, and other federal agencies, has been excacerbated by Gore's Reinventing Goverment scheme, which has slashed away internal controls on discriminatory hiring and promotion practices and destroyed the merit pay system. A chilling report by Blacks in Government calls the effects of REGO a kind of "ethnic cleansing" of the federal workforce.

Adequate merit protections and the control of favoritism and corruption have been the concerns of every civil service since the dawn of civilization. Yet Gore's cocksure reinventors, with "reengineering" blueprints from the corporate sector in their briefcases, staked all on "flexible" management tools, meaning that managers could now favor their buddies, without accountability.

It's the same with the Secret Service. A few months ago detail of black Secret Service agents took their complaints about racial harassment inside the agency to Al Gore. They told Gore stories of watching as their colleagues took target practice at the Secret Service firing range by placing photos of Martin Luther King Jr. on the targets. Gore dismissed the complaints from his own black bodyguards, telling them that it was the Treasury Department's problem and not his concern. CP

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and Portland, through the upper midwest to New York. In Minnesota Nader was polling over ten per cent on some counts. In parts of south Minneapolis, Pat Costain of the Resource Center of the Americas told us, there are so many Nader signs on the front lawns you'd think he was Democratic candidate against Bush. In Washington, Oregon, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and Maine, maybe even California, Nader could make enough of a dent to put Bush over the top.

And so the Get-Ralph campaign began in earnest. In many ways the contour of the attacks reminded us of the last time the Democrats had to deal with dissidence, back in 1988 with Jesse Jackson's populist challenge. "What does Jesse want?" was reborn as "What does Nader want?" But Jackson was running inside the Democratic Party. By the time the '88 convention in Atlanta rolled around, Jackson was back on board. By the start of 1989 and the Bush years, he'd brusquely disbanded the Rainbow and fallen into line.

"If the basis of popular government in time of peace is virtue, the basis of popular government in time of revolution is both virtue and terror: virtue without which terror is murderous, terror without which virtue is powerless." That was Max Robespierre, back in 1794. We've always seen Ralph as our Robespierre, having to make do with class actions suits instead of the guillotine. Years ago the late Jim Goode, at that time editor of Penthouse, used to look across the piles of pin-ups with a shudder of distaste (he was gay) and snarl at one of us, "Alex, is your hate pure?" "Yes, Jim." Ralph's hate is pure.

So when the Democrats came at him, when he saw Toby Moffett, formerly a Nader Raider and until recently a Monsanto lobbyist, lining up squadrons of Nader bashers, he didn't blink and say he'd just had a long conversation with Al Gore and he'd be suspending his campaign, was instructing his supporters to vote the Gore-Lieberman ticket, and would be accepting an "influential" position inside the next Democratic administration (something we'll bet the Gore camp already tried). He'd no doubt prefer to be running at over 30 per cent, but short of that, the privilege of being able to influence the race in at least six states is exactly what Nader had been waiting for all along: the power to remind the Democratic Party it can't take for granted the progressive slice of the country.

Get Nader! 2,500 words from Todd Gitlin in Slate, still flourishing the instructive fable of Hubert Humphrey, dissed by radicals in '68. To be attacked by Gitlin, as the British politician Dennis Healey once remarked of one of his parliamentary opponents, is like being savaged by a dead sheep. "If Nader had run in the primaries", Gitlin wrote, "or half the Naderite energy went to organizing a Million Human March to welcome Gore to Washington the day after he's inaugurated, we on the left would stand a reasonable chance of seeing a Gore more to our liking." Oh yeah? Just like Michael Dukakis responded to Jesse Jackson's challenge in the '88 primaries by speaking to the concerns of the poor and the black in the fall campaign? Dukakis' first symbolic act in that same campaign was to visit the Neshoba County Fair in Mississippi (where Reagan had opened an earlier election bid) at which venue Dukakis conspicuously failed to mention the three civil rights workers slain in the 1960s not so far away. And how, four years later, did Clinton and Gore respond to the Jackson push? By insulting Sister Souljah, as a way of telling white voters the Clinton campaign was not held ransom by the "special interests", i.e., blacks. After reading Gitlin we bet that within Nader would soon be under attack as a dirty Arab who wants to destroy the state of Israel. Sure enough. Within 48 hours we had a piece in the Forward and we had a blast from Marty Peretz in the New Republic.

Under the headline "Nader's Green Party Calls For Halt of Aid to Israel / Gadfly Charges Gore, Bush 'Taking Sides' for Israel" the Forward's Nacha Cattan reported that "Ralph Nader's Green Party called this week for a suspension of United States aid to Israel and blamed the Jewish state for the current violence in the Middle East". Cattan produced the sinister news that "Mr. Nader, a son of Lebanese immigrants … is said to be fluent in Arabic". Then the kicker: "Democratic activists are calling the Green Party's statement one of the most anti-Israel ever attributed to a party engaged in a presidential campaign. They are demanding that Green Party Jews abandon Mr. Nader and his running mate, Winona LaDuke, a Native American activist whose mother is Jewish."

As one might expect , Peretz was cruder. After noting the outrageous fact that Ralph Nader had dared to open his mouth on the topic of the Middle East, Peretz went to work: "There is something even more curious than Nader's sudden pandering. (Excuse us, his sudden hunger for Levantine [!] peace.) It turns out that Nader's cheapness on this question, and his conspiratorial view of the world, go back very far. They go back to March 1960, when the left's gaunt hero published an article called

We've always seen Ralph Nader as our Robespierre, having to make do with class actions suits instead of the guillotine.

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"Business Is Deserting America", in which he warned ominously of "our ingrained gullibility to internationalism." The remarkable thing is that Nader published his piece in The American Mercury, an obscenely anti-Semitic magazine. Nader's piece appeared in the same months that the magazine was publishing a series called "Termites of the Cross". …

"As soon as anyone demonstrates that he is willing to expose the enemies of communism or world Zionism, their vast machines start working to advance his interests. The Disciples of Judas do not even have to be openly pro-Communist or pro-Zionist to qualify for the big payoff...."

Just think! For forty years either Peretz has been keeping that old copy of the American Mercury ready against the day he might have to prove that Nader is Himmler's first cousin, or more likely, someone at the Anti-Defamation League riffled through that outfit's files and rushed the clip over. It's awe-inspiring. Way back in the mid-Sixties, when Nader was attacking General Motors, someone at the ADL was taking careful note of the fact that Nader was of Lebanese origin and might, one day, represent a threat to Israel. Perhaps the investigators working for GM workeed hand in hand with the ADL from the start. And so then Nader keeps his mouth tactfully shut for forty years on all questions relating to the Middle East, knowing full well that the moment he opens it on a matter unrelated to consumer issues, the Israeli lobby will try and blow his head off. Finally, as a presidential candidate who is supposed to have views on such affairs, Nader has the effrontery to criticize Israel. And lo! Here comes Peretz, who has spent forty years opposing any decent settlement in Israel and bolstering his former student Gore to do the same, waving his tattered old page from the American Mercury, where Nader has been warning about gullibility to internationalism, exactly as he is today with his attacks on "free trade".

Truly, there's no one more venomous than a cold war liberal on the rampage. By the time we worked our way through Peretz's next paragraph, Nader was associated with communism, a vast anti-Zionist conspiracy, Judas, and a big pay-off. It made Jack Tapper's attack on Nader's stock portfolio look pretty tame, even though Tapper did get what looked like a solid hit against Nader for having investments in the Fidelity Magellan mutual fund which itself has positions in some no-no stocks, such as Occidental, Boeing and Raytheon, from the Nader point of view.

A final irony. As the Gore attack whippets snapped at Nader the most conspicuous effect was a turn-off by Democratic voters, in the form of lower predicted turn-out. Early checks of Oregon's postal ballots showed a sharp falloff from the vote four years ago, but with Nader's numbers going up. This boded ill for any hopes of a Democratic recapture of the House of Representatives. Not that Gore probably cared. Back in 1996 he denied House leaders vital campaign funds with which they might have recaptured the House back then. He didn't wan t to see his rival Dick Gephardt as house majority leader. There's Al for you. And they attack Nader as bad for the Democratic Party! CP

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